

## Update Fall 1999

**\*\*Project Complete\*\***

### **Elk Reintroduction Feasibility Study--Fall, '99--Craig Scroggins - MO Department of Conservation**

At the request of Missouri Conservation Federation, the Conservation Commission directed Department of Conservation staff to conduct a study of the feasibility of reintroducing Elk into Missouri. An elk reintroduction feasibility study proposal was developed and presented to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for funding in January 1999. Funding of the project was approved and the study began in May 1999 with completion of the study and a report to the Conservation Commission expected by August 2000.

The elk reintroduction feasibility study consists of two primary parts: a biological assessment and a socioeconomic assessment. The biological assessment is near completion and will be used to help target parts of the socioeconomic assessment. The biological assessment was intended to determine if there are sites in Missouri with suitable habitat to support elk but where human/elk conflicts would be minimal. The biological assessment was conducted in cooperation with the Missouri Resource Assessment Partnership (MoRAP) who provided land cover classifications and conducted analyses using geographic information system (GIS) procedures. Only counties south of the Missouri River were considered for an elk reintroduction because of the agricultural conflicts that would arise if elk were released in northern Missouri. The GIS analyses consisted of three phases. In each phase a series of habitat and human activity criteria was used as a sieve to eliminate and select sites as suitable locations for an elk reintroduction. The most suitable sites for an elk release should include little or no cropland, a component of open land and a high percentage of land in public ownership.

After all information from the surveys is analyzed, public meetings will be conducted within potential release areas. The objectives will be to present basic information about elk reintroduction and facilitate discussion in an open forum about citizen issues or concerns.

